

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 EB-08 EA-10 FRB-03 INR-10 NEA-10 NSAE-00
ICA-11 OPIC-03 SP-02 TRSE-00 LAB-04 AGRE-00
OMB-01 SS-15 NSC-05 /115 W
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R 260634Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0622
INFO ALL OECD CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION GENEVA

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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, FR
SUBJECT: THE CGT AT PRAGUE: TACTICAL DIFFERENCES
BECOMING STRATEGIC?

REF: (A) PARIS 12158; (B) PARIS 34053 OF NOVEMBER 21,
1977; (C) PARIS 01106 AND REFERENCES (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: AS PROMISED, THE DOMESTICALLY HARD-
PRESSED CGT MADE A DRAMATIC SHOWING OF ITS DIFFERENCES
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WITH THE EASTERN EUROPEANS AT THE PRAGUE CONGRESS OF
THE WFTU. WHILE THIS ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE
APPEARS DESIGNED FOR DOMESTIC AND WESTERN CONSUMP-
TION, IT RAISES THE POSSIBILITY THAT, IN TIME, BOTH
THE FRENCH CONFEDERATION AND ITS EASTERN EUROPEAN
COUNTERPARTS MAY FIND IT MORE CONVENIENT IF THE CGT
GOES ITS OWN WAY. END SUMMARY.

2. JUDGING FROM THE EXTENSIVE REPORTS APPEARING IN THE FRENCH PRESS, INCLUDING THE COMMUNIST PARTY DAILY L'HUMANITE, AND THE STORIES CIRCULATING AMONGST THE TRADE UNIONS HERE, THE CGT STAGED, AS PROMISED (SEE REF A), A GENUINE CONFRONTATION WITH THE EASTERN EUROPEANS AT THE PRAGUE CONGRESS OF THE WFTU. THE ISSUE IN DISPUTE WAS A BASIC ONE -- THE RIGHT OF TRADE UNIONS IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES TO DISAGREE WITH THEIR GOVERNMENTS. THE REFUSAL OF THE EASTERN EUROPEANS TO GO ALONG WITH SUCH AN IDEA, EVEN WHEN PUT IN THE MILDEST TERMS, LED THE CGT TO WITHDRAW PIERRE GENSOUS AS CANDIDATE FOR REELECTION AS WFTU GENERAL SECRETARY, AND EVENTUALLY TO A SHARP PUBLIC EXCHANGE OF WORDS BETWEEN CGT GENERAL SECRETARY SEGUY AND THE CZECH TRADE UNION LEADER HOFFMANN, CULMINATING IN A BARELY VEILED THREAT: IF THE EASTERN EUROPEANS MADE THINGS TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE FRENCH IN THE WFTU, THEY MIGHT HAVE TO LEAVE.

3. THIS ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE ATTENDANT DOWNGRADING OF THE CGT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WFTU COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE FRENCH UNION IS IN TROUBLE. IN THE WAKE OF THE LEFT'S DEFEAT IN THE MARCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTION, THE CGT'S LONG-STANDING IMPORTANT ALLIANCE WITH THE LEFT-WING SOCIALIST CFDT HAS BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CALLED INTO QUESTION; AND, MORE IMPORTANT STILL, ITS POSITION IN THE FACTORIES, AS MEASURED IN PLANT ELECTIONS, IS ERODING SHARPLY AND QUICKLY, FOR THE MOST PART IN FAVOR OF ITS ANTI-COMMUNIST RIVAL, FORCE OUVRIERE (FO). THESE TROUBLES ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF THE CGT'S OPEN AND TOTAL SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE ELECTIONS; AND THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF THAT PARTY IN SABOTAGING A LEFT VICTORY. (HOWEVER, WITHIN FO, AS AMONGST CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE CFDT, THE PLANT VOTES ARE SEEN AS REGISTERING AN EVEN MORE BASIC CHANGE: MOUNTING WORKER DISCONTENT WITH POLITICAL TRADE UNIONISM.) THESE DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES IN TURN HAVE SPILLED OVER INTO THE INTERNATIONAL AREA, AND DAMAGED THE CGT'S CAREFULLY CULTIVATED POSTURE OF AN INDEPENDENT AND RESPONSIBLE TRADE UNION.

4. IN THAT CONNECTION, IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND THAT ALTHOUGH IT HAS HISTORICALLY PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE WFTU ORGANIZATION, THE CGT REGARDS ITSELF AS A WESTERN EUROPEAN ORGANIZATION, WHOSE PROPER INTERNATIONAL ROLE IS IN THAT AREA AND AMONGST ITS

TRADE UNIONS. FOR THIS REASON, IT HAS AS ONE OF ITS PARTICULAR GOALS ADMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC). HOWEVER, ETUC HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE PRICE OF CGT ENTRY INTO ETUC IS, AS IT WAS FOR THE ITALIANS, A BREAK WITH THE WFTU. THIS

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO ALL OECD CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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THE CGT HAS PERSISTENTLY REFUSED TO DO, PERHAPS BECAUSE, AS CFDT LEADER EDMUND MAIRE HAS TOLD US, THE EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT THAT THE CGT AFFILIATES HAVE FOR THEIR INTERNATIONAL TIES THROUGH WFTU MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE CGT LEADERSHIP TO INITIATE THE BREAK.

5. UP UNTIL NOW, AND ALTHOUGH REFUSING TO LEAVE THE

WFTU, THE CGT HAS DONE WHAT IT COULD TO PUT DISTANCE
BETWEEN THAT BODY AND ITS EASTERN EUROPEAN MEMBERS.
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IT HAS ENGAGED IN PUBLIC QUARRELS WITH THE CZECH
TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, PUBLISHED POLICY STATEMENTS
ON TRADE UNION RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES,
WARNED THAT IT WILL NOT BE QUIET ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF
THOSE RIGHTS IN THOSE COUNTRIES, AND THREATENED TO
HAVE GENSOU WITHDRAW AS A CANDIDATE FOR REELECTION
IF THE WFTU DID NOT REVITALIZE ITSELF (SEE REF B).
NONE OF THESE ACTIONS, HOWEVER, PROVED ENOUGH TO
EITHER SATISFY ETUC OR BUDGE THE WFTU.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF INTERWOVEN DOMESTIC
AND INTERNATIONAL WOES, THE CGT WENT TO PRAGUE IN
NO POSITION TO BACK OFF FROM ITS DEMANDS ON THE WFTU
WITHOUT RUNNING THE RISK OF STILL GREATER LOSSES IN
PRESTIGE AND CREDIBILITY ON ALL FRONTS. IT HAD
TO MAKE A SHOW OF INDEPENDENCE AND FORCEFULNESS.
THEREFORE, WHAT IS INTERESTING IS NOT THAT THE CGT
HAD A PUBLIC ROW WITH THE EASTERN EUROPEANS, BUT THE
EXTENT TO WHICH THEY SEEM DETERMINED TO CONTINUE IT;
AND WHAT IS NEW IS THE CGT'S HINT THAT IF THE EASTERN
EUROPEANS CONTINUE TO ATTACK IT FOR DEFENDING TRADE
UNION RIGHTS IN THE WFTU, THEY MAY LEAVE. (UPON HIS
RETURN TO PARIS, SEGUY TIGHTENED THE SCREWS
AGAIN, BY SAYING THAT IF THE WFTU TAKES OUT ITS DIF-
FERENCES WITH THE CGT ON THE FRENCH STAFFERS IN THAT
ORGANIZATION, THE CGT WILL NOT INSIST THAT THEY STAY
AT THEIR POSTS.)

7. AT THIS POINT, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE TACTICAL
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CGT AND THE EASTERN EUROPEANS
MAY BE EVOLVING INTO STRATEGIC ONES. THE CGT
APPARENTLY FEELS THAT IT CANNOT BACK DOWN, AND THE
EASTERN EUROPEANS HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES ANYTHING
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BUT UNDERSTANDING. (SOME OBSERVERS HERE HAVE MADE
SPECIAL NOTE OF THE FAILURE OF THE SO-CALLED REAL
TRADE UNIONISTS AMONGST THE EASTERN EUROPEANS, SUCH
AS GASPAR, TO HELP THE CGT.) IF THESE EXCHANGES
CONTINUE, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IN TIME THE WFTU WILL
BE JUST AS HAPPY TO SEE THE CGT GO ITS OWN WAY, RATHER
THAN HAVE IT REMAIN AS A DISRUPTIVE AND EMBARRASSING

FORCE IN THE ORGANIZATION. AND THIS MAY BE EXACTLY WHAT THE CGT LEADERSHIP WANTS, IF THERE IS SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO ANY VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE.

8. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, DURING THE CONGRESS, THE STRAINS BETWEEN THE CGT AND THE EASTERN EUROPEANS WERE HEIGHTENED BY THE EFFORTS OF BOTH FO AND THE TEACHERS UNION FEN. THESE TWO UNIONS, WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE CFDT, AND TO SOME EXTENT WITH VARIOUS TROTSKYITE GROUPS, INSPIRED A PRESS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED TO COINCIDE WITH THE MIDDLE OF THE UFTU CONGRESS. THE CONFERENCE WAS CONVENED IN THE NAME OF ALL FOUR MAJOR FRENCH LABOR UNIONS -- FO, CFDT, FEN AND CGT -- AS A DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR COMMON SUPPORT FOR VISITING EMIGRE RUSSIAN, POLISH, CZECH AND ROMANIAN TRADE UNIONISTS, AND OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE FREE WORKERS MOVEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE. THE CGT HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY EXCLUDED FROM THE PREPARATORY WORK, AND ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY PAINED BY THE TRAP, HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO PARTICIPATE OR UNDERCUT ITS OWN POSITION AT PRAGUE. (MAKING A FURTHER VIRTUE OF NECESSITY, THE CGT SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED, UPON ITS RETURN FROM PRAGUE, THAT ONE OF ITS DELEGATION MEMBERS, THE NON-COMMUNIST CLAUDE DUHAMEL, HAD MET WITH THE CHARTER 77 MEMBERS.)

9. AT THIS JUNCTURE, AND ALTHOUGH IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO BE ABLE TO COME TO ANY DEFINITIVE CONCLUSIONS, THE CGT'S ACTIONS AT PRAGUE SHOULD GIVE NO RISE FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANY JUBILATION. THE LINE THE CGT IS FOLLOWING IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS TO USG INTERESTS IN THE LABOR FIELD THAN ANYTHING THE WFTU IS CAPABLE OF MOUNTING. FROM

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OUR VANTAGE POINT, IT WOULD SEEM THAT BY TAKING ON
THE EASTERN EUROPEANS IN THIS DRAMATIC WAY, THE CGT,
MERE WEEKS AFTER REVEALING ITSELF AS A HANDMAIDEN OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY, NOT ONLY HAS IMPROVED ITS IMAGE
IN FRANCE AND THE WEST, BUT HELPED REVIVE HOPES THAT
THE CGT AND FRENCH COMMUNISM IN GENERAL ARE EVOLVING
TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE AND RESPECT FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.
THIS MAY HAVE SOME CONSEQUENCES NOT ONLY FOR THE
DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE (WHERE THERE IS A GREAT DEAL
OF NOISE COMING OUT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AND WHERE
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THE SOCIALISTS AND THE CFDT ARE STUDYING THEIR POLICY
OPTIONS), BUT ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AS WELL.
IN THAT CONNECTION, ONE VETERAN OBSERVER OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOR SCENE NOTES THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE
ASSUMING THAT WHAT THE CGT HAS DONE TO THE WFTU AT
PRAGUE MUST BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SOVIET UNION.
THAT, HE WARNS, IS NOT NECESSARILY SO; AND THAT THE
SOVIETS MAY BE PERFECTLY WILLING TO LET THE CGT DO
WHAT IT CAN TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE BY THE TRADE UNIONS
OF THE WEST. IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND THAT WHAT THE
CGT APPEARS TO BE AFTER, ULTIMATELY, IS A LARGE LOOSE
REGIONAL CONFEDERATION OF ALL THE UNIONS IN WESTERN
EUROPE, INCLUDING EVERYONE REGARDLESS OF THEIR

IDEOLOGICAL PERSUASIONS -- EXCEPT, OF COURSE, THE
AMERICANS AND CANADIANS.
GAMMON

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Message Attributes

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